1: Petrullo E-3 (1933-34) 1939 SS19 Yaruro SS19

INHERITANCE OF WIVES

583 Monogamy is the usual rule, but occasionally both polygyny and polyandry exist. If no women are available, a man may share his young wife with his brother or parallel cousin whom he calls brother also. I saw two such cases. In a tribe whose total membership may not exceed 150 such situations may easily arise.

587 589 The more common situation is the inheritance of wives. If a man dies, his wife may be taken care of by her father, but more often by her former husband's brother. She takes her place as wife number two, especially if he is a good hunter. Other women whom a man may inherit as wives are his aunts on his father's side and even his paternal grandmother. I saw one case in which a man had inherited his daughter's child. Whether these cases represent the results of [616] deculturation of the Yaruros in recent years, or pure necessity, it is impossible to say. It is worth noting that the taboo on marrying a member of one's moiety is strictly observed.

512 605 Another relationship common among South American Indians which is present among the Yaruros is the hunting friendship between two men. Seldom does one meet a young Yaruro who does not have a hunting companion. Upon marriage this relationship may be weakened, though often the companionship persists. Generally the men are two parallel cousins. They show much affection toward each other, even in camp. For instance, such a pair standing with arms around each other's necks is a common sight. I have no reason to suspect any abnormal sexual relations between such couples.

124 582 [165] An attempt was made to collect genealogies, but no satisfactory results were obtained, due to the confusion that exists among the Yaruros. So many have suffered premature death, especially men, that the genealogies show a tremendous complexity. This complexity exists, of course, only for us. The Yaruro has his system, which is to guard against incest as he defines it. So long as members of the same moiety do not marry, everything else is permissible. One's cross cousin of the same, or nearly the same, age is the preferential choice, but the Yaruros cannot control birth and death, so that the preference is purely theoretical. I saw young boys married to old women and young girls married to old men. The answer was that there weren't any others to marry.

However, enough was gathered from the genealogies to verify the system as described: Members of the same moiety do not marry. Every one else can, except father and daughter, and, of course, father's brothers and daughter, whom she addresses as father anyway.

and socio-economic forms. Nor can any immediate desire or fancy of the Yaruro change the limitations which the ecological relationship imposes: the carrying capacity of the land for horticultural food plants has, with the given technology, a fairly fixed upper limit. That such limitations exist for their horticulture is recognized by the Yaruro themselves to some extent. First, they recognize that, given the types of soils extant in the habitat, only certain kinds of crops can be used in certain places. Their knowledge in this regard seems to be quite accurate, and, of course, determines where a garden will be prepared at any given time according to projected needs, existing resources, and past exploitations. Again, they know that a swidden lasts three years, a fact not only confirmed by the evidence of conditions in recently abandoned patches but also by the results of soil analyses.[9] After the three years, they say, the swidden must be allowed to fallow for a number of years. They use the word 'five', but the writer believes 'five' is intended to mean 'some' years. The conditions of abandoned gardens, with their rank growth of lush grasses, unmanageable with dibble or machete, and of the places chosen for preparing new gardens, all cut out of relatively large second growth, suggest that the fallow period is at least 10 years, and probably upwards. We shall use 10 years as a basis for calculations below, since after such a time, the shade has driven out the succulent grasses which are replaced by herbaceous plants or woody underbrush. In view of these considerations, it may be said that Yaruro horticultural practices have been well-adapted to the particular soil and water conditions of their habitat on the basis of explicit recognition of these conditions.

Without basic change in their technology, the balance between the Yaruro's present technology and the habitat conditions we have described set real upper limits both on production and on productivity, the latter defined as production per capita per year, and therefore sets limits on the absolute size and the form of the society. Let us suppose optimal population conditions unlike the present continuing depopulation due to western diseases and massacres by Venezuelans were present as an hypothetical ideal state. The tendency of any plant or animal population is to increase until it balances in a stable equilibrium with the available nutritional resources, other factors constant.[10] If the population increases beyond this point, either a portion of the population must seek elsewhere for its food, or a portion must die, or the population will exploit the resources so as temporarily or permanently to reduce them to lower potentials, as in the case of cattle overgrazing pastures. A new land-population equilibrium is then reached at a somewhat lower level. The only other possibility is to innovate new forms of exploitation, a point we return to below.

Under optimal conditions, then, we may estimate maximum Yaruro population within the boundaries of such a territory as presently occupied by the Caño Totúdoro Yaruro of the Central Cinaruco, a territory bounded for all practical purposes by walking-and-working distance from the village. Within this area of about 65 sq. mi. a maximum of about 800 acres, or that 2% of the total area which is wooded, contains all tillable land. However,

[9,10 [for footnotes see p. 42-48, category 116 -- Analyst]]

/117 cont./

3. The Population.

a) Demography (see Tables III, IV, and V).

162 On the Capanaparo and the Riecito we have taken a census of 519 Yaruro (29 communities out of 30). Two-thirds (65.1%) of this population are adults (we do not have a breakdown by age) and the remainder (34.9%) prepuberal children. Among the adults the sexes are divided into two almost equal figures: 173 (51.2%) are men and 165 (48.8%) women. We have the /118/. /Table III appears here/ /119/ /Table IV and Table V appear here/ /120/ breakdown by sexes for children only in five communities; the totals for each of them gives us, there also, twofigures which are practically equal: 23 male children to 21 female.

163 165 Our statistics on births and mortality bear on only three communities with a total of 38 inhabitants in 1947; they are thus rather imprecise. During the period 1947 to 1950, i.e., during three years, we registered 6 births and 9 deaths (6 adults--2 men and 4 women--and 3 young children), that is, two births for three deaths (150% mortality) or, for the total population of the three villages, the respective percentages of 15.8% births and 23.7% deaths. The young children who died comprise one-third of the total of deaths (33.3%) and one half of the total births, which gives, for these 38 Yaruro, a 50% infant mortality.

161 On the basis of these statistics the Yaruro are on the way to extinction. This appears to be confirmed by the Indians themselves who state that they were formerly more numerous and that their number is going down each year. "We die with [115] [756] the first sickness," our old informant, Pedro Ramon Camacho (1)

1. Head and shaman of community 6.

told us, "and that's why there are so few of us. We are disappearing."

[text continues on p. 16]

5:Le Besnerais--14 E-5 (1947-1950) 1954 SS19 Yaruro SS19

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TABLE IV

BIRTHS — DEATHS

No. of the Comm.	POPULATION 1947				BIRTHS 1947-1950	DEATHS 1947-1950					% Deaths/Births	
	Adults ♂	Adults ♀	Children	Total		Adults ♂	Adults ♀	Total	Children	General Total	General	Children
6	3	6	9	18								
7	1	4	6	11								
8	3	2	4	9								
Total	7	12	19	38	6	2	4	6	3	9		
%					15.8 (a)				33.3 (b)	23.7 (a)	150.0	50.0

(a) Of the total population of the three communities.

(b) Of the total deaths.